

Cathedra or Throne Chair, Late 16th Century, French Second Renaissance, Walnut

£18,000



REF: 11208

Height: 205 cm (80.7")

Width: 75 cm (29.5")

Depth: 49 cm (19.3")

Description

A moulded cornice sits above the high, panelled back with fluting and applied roundels. The later, metal pin on the left edge releases the central, moulded panel in the back which retains its original hinges. When the pin is removed the panel can be lowered, revealing a large area behind. The scroll arms are supported by tapering turnings which can be compared with mid-16th century benches of the nave such as those in the churches in Gerberoy and Coivrel which are in Oise, the Piccardie region of France.

The panelled, box seat has later 18th century hinges which reveal a large, compartment and the lock has been removed. The front stiles are decorated with a carved, geometric motif which is derived from architectural design and is found on furniture of this calibre from this epoch. Old worm damage and minor losses. Henri II.

This type of chair was made from the 15th century, and can be seen in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, and cathedrals in France. This cathedra displays the rigid structure of a chair of honour according to the Gothic system, full panels, high back and hinged box seat but the scroll arms and tapering turnings date it to the Second Renaissance. See No 123 which has similar shaped arms and turnings ; chaire a haut dossier bois de Noyer, France, seconde Renaissance vers 1560-1570, collection privée, (Le Mobilier Français du Moyen Age à la Renaissance, Jacqueline Boccador).

Measures: Back height 205 cm., 80 ¾ in, seat height 62 cm., 24 ½ in. Cornice length 75 cm., 29 ½ in. Length 64 cm., 25 in., depth 49 cm., 19 ¼ in., Inside panel opening length 46 cm., 18 in., height 84cm., 33 in.,

Provenance: PROVENANCE : Private collection along with a walnut, centre table with slate inset from the same period.

RELATED TO : No 122, cathedre ecritoire, bois de Noyer, Bourgogne, époque Henri II, vers 1560-1570, collection privée, (Le Mobilier Français du Moyen Age à la Renaissance, Jacqueline Boccador), which also has a hinged back panel. Le mobilier picard 1200-1700, Laurence Fligny, ed Picard, 1990, discusses the benches of the nave in Gerberoy & Coivrel.

Exhibitions: The opening back panel is an ingenious device for concealment as it is not visible from the front or obvious. I only know of one other chair with this feature which is illustrated in Boccador no 122. The original pin was most likely a wooden peg which would appear as part of the structure of the cathedra. When this long, pin is removed the panel can be lowered, revealing a large area behind. We can therefore conclude that this cathedra was made with the intention of concealing and giving access to object/s of great value or importance such as a religious or political iconography which tended to be bound together.

The 'cathedra' was originally associated with the Catholic Church where it was reserved as the seat of the Bishop and placed against the wall of the apse of the church. It is possible that this 'cathedra' was made for a church or monastery where the panel could have been used to conceal items like documents, charters and relics. However these would have been kept inside a container which would need to be stored within a recess in the wall behind. Given that t...